

Music

RACHMANINOFF RECITAL.

Rachmaninoff, foremost among pianists of generations within recollection, and notable among contemporary composers of high rank, made of his recital last evening at Emery Auditorium an event of supreme musical importance, presenting a program representing fine discrimination in a manner to justify descriptive superlatives.

Reactions to Rachmaninoff's playing are not commonplace; they are not merely excited emotions, flashes of throbbing warmth, stilled pulsations. One takes away no impression of a pianist's playing or of his technique and virtuosity. One listens to composer's creations, recreated through the medium of a genius of surpassing gifts; it is a great human who has understood the beauties and workmanship of great composers and whose intellect guides the recreation of these beauties so that all who can and will may understand, too.

Pianism, as most of us think of it, is a trifling something. He who can play the fastest and loudest; he who can sob with the limpidity of his own tone and the polishing of his sweet melodies, he who by his manner and mannerism can make his audience marvel at his fleet fingers and emotional expression—such as he give nothing more than an evening's entertainment and leave nothing that can abide.

But he who can efface his own art from audience view and concentrate all attention and interest on the music he is loving and living himself, abides forever because it is tangible in the compositions that always will recall the genius who performed them; they will always bear the stamp of his authority of interpretation.

Rachmaninoff may not be denied colossal virtuosity. His command of the keyboard challenges comparison with any of present-day exponents of technical display. Nor may he be denied every capacity for emotional expression. But his technique is never on display and his emotions are never insignificant. His playing suggests a strong man of patrician character with superb intellect and unfathomable depths. He awes by his personality; he commands that profound respect absolute honesty always attracts; without any apparent effort on his part to win any of his audience, he is granted wholesome esteem by all. Those who heard him last evening should keep in mind that they heard one who has made musical history. Frankly, they were outstandingly privileged.

The program was completely satisfactory in its proportions and unity, as well as in the intrinsic caliber of each number. The first half was devoted to "Ballades"; Grieg's Op. 24, the "Edward" Ballade and the D major one from Op. 10 of Brahms, that in B minor of Liszt and Chopin's well-loved A flat Ballade.

Who has a right to ask for more? The Grieg "Ballade" almost is a novelty. After last evening we almost are willing to ascribe it eminence. Certainly it is one of the composer's finest contributions to piano literature. Rachmaninoff found none of the usual sentimentalities in it and even covered its tonal monotony through a wealth of shading and nuances. Liszt's Ballade was made a masterpiece of symphonic coloring and climax building. The Brahms pieces were tone poems of exquisite loveliness, played as we never before have heard them.

After the intermission the pianist played of his own composition, a set of variations on a Corelli theme, the F sharp minor prelude and a short Oriental sketch. The first and the last mentioned are still in manuscript. They are pieces with that individuality of style Rachmaninoff gives to his creative offerings, utterly charming and extremely grateful from a pianist's point of view. The final number was Liszt's "Tarentella, Venezia e Napoli." Encores were demanded and freely granted.

An audience that filled not only the auditorium but the stage as well were demonstratively enthusiastic and content beyond all expectation. The artist reacted to the appreciation and gave possibly the finest recital he has ever given in Cincinnati.

GEORGE A. LEIGHTON.